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Corruption, Automation Reforms, Patron-Client Networks and New Media: Electoral Engineering and the May 2010 Philippine Elections

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Abstract

This exploratory inquiry interrogates the impact of electoral engineering reforms through synchronized automated elections in a Philippine context suffering from systemic corruption. The May 2010 elections heralded a watershed in electoral processes and practices. Results of local (congressional) and national (senatorial, vice-president and presidential) elections were obtained nearly overnight. The elections dramatically altered the mode of Philippine elections: typified by arduous and onerous delays in announcing results stretching all the way to several months after elections. Although violence still marred the elections, it was relatively one of the more peaceful elections ever experienced. This inquiry attempts to explore the impact of this unprecedented electoral reform to political competition, allegations of corruption, the prevalence of patron-client networks, the influence of media and the political fortunes of candidates who supported electoral automation. Using data obtained from the elections, this inquiry proposes analytical models in understanding changes and continuities in election reforms and corruption in determining outcomes – individual votes garnered during the elections.

Keywords: Patron-client; elections; automation; Philippines; corruption.

Introduction

This inquiry attempts to explore how the unprecedented electoral engineering reforms represented by the May 2010 elections made an impact on

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political competition, allegations of corruption, the unprecedented automation of elections, the prevalence of patron-client networks the influence of media and the political fortunes of candidates. A premise made in this article is that in a Philippine context, the bureaucracy in general, and represented in this inquiry, by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) is dysfunctional¹ and that corruption has an “ubiquitous impact”² on governance and administration. So serious is the malaise of corruption and its linkage with elections that the Asia Foundation has identified that one of its key development programs in countering corruption and one of the specific strategies it pursues is helping establish “Free and Fair elections”³. Scholars and practitioners of Philippine anti-corruption have often considered that the automation of elections is an effective means to curb corruption⁴. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Philippine government in its governance assessment reports have advocated for election reforms, a vital component of which is automation⁵. The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) in its 2009 Philippine Electoral Reform document stated that “automation is seen by many in the Philippines as a cure-all for the election woes of the country and its failure would have wide-reaching consequences”⁶. This article views the May 2010 automation of elections as an appropriate example of electoral engineering, the practice of changing formal electoral rules in order to “generate major consequences by altering the strategic behaviour of politicians, parties and citizens”⁷. Being unprecedented, the conditions surrounding the May 2010 elections are quite unique. For purposes of this exploration, this inquiry tests the

¹ Vicente Reyes, "Case Study of Implementation Amidst Corruption Linkages: The National Textbook Delivery Programme (Tdp) of the Philippine Department of Education", *Journal of Educational Policy* 24, no. 4 (2009).

² Vicente Reyes, "Corruption and Policy Implementation in the Philippines: A Comparative Analysis of the Teacher Training and Textbook Delivery Programmes", *Asian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2007).

³ The Asia Foundation, "Asia Foundation Programs in the Philippines", San Francisco, USA, The Asia Foundation, 2011, p. 273.

⁴ Teresita Angeles, "An Anti-Corruption Strategy for the Philippines", in *Asia Pacific School of Economics and Management Working Papers*, Canberra, Australia, Australian National University, 1999; Michael Johnston, "Political and Social Foundations for Reform: Anti-Corruption Strategies for the Philippines", Manila, Philippines, Asian Institute of Management, 2010.

⁵ Asian Development Bank, "Country Governance Assessment", Manila, Philippines, Asian Development Bank, 2005; National Economic Development Authority, "Updated Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan 2004-2010", Manila, Philippines, National Economic Development Authority, 2009.

⁶ International Foundation for Electoral Systems, "Philippines Election Reform Project", in *Ifes Final Project Report* ed. USAID, Washington, D.C., International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 2009, p. 15.

⁷ Pippa Norris, *Electoral Engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behavior*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 8.

effectiveness of this electoral engineering reform initiative by using number of votes, as the main outcome variable for the very cogent argument that votes can be used to approximate changes in the behaviour patterns of politicians, parties and citizens.

Elections considered as one of the core tenets of democracy has been identified as an arena where anti-corruption efforts need to be intensified. International, multilateral agencies as well as the Philippine government itself, pursuing anti-corruption initiatives have built their reform agenda on the pillars of ensuring that elections are free (defined as voters having “the opportunity to participate in the election without coercion or restriction of any kind”) and fair (“a level playing ground for all candidates”)⁸.

This inquiry interrogates the changes and continuities that have typified election reforms in the Philippines. It attempts to examine the extent of political competition (i.e. free and fair) that has emerged from the 2010 automation election reform. Focusing on the Philippine’s National Capital Region (NCR) as an exploratory case study, this probing examination sheds light on electoral contests for positions in the Upper House (Senate) of the Philippine Congress (see Table 1). This exploration is naïve as it offers “no sophisticated theory of voting, rigorously tested in a statistical model”⁹. This article attempts to explore possible explanations to the puzzle of candidates garnering a lion’s share of votes, notwithstanding proven convictions or even serious allegations of corruption. The initial section describes the Philippine context where systemic corruption exists alongside Philippine elections. The succeeding section interrogates the dominant theoretical framework that has typically been identified as the explanation for the conundrum of Philippine electoral politics. The latter half of the inquiry undertakes a cross-sectional, non-experimental analysis that posits preliminary models formulated as attempts to explain Philippine electoral puzzles. These models are then used as initial discussion points for a more nuanced – and optimistically a more insightful paradigm – into making sense of the issues and challenges brought about by election reforms amidst systemic corruption within the Philippine electoral system. This article posits that an analysis of Philippine politics must necessarily investigate the interplay of corruption and the implementation of vital policies.¹⁰

⁸ Jorgen Elklit and Palle Svensson, "What Makes Elections 'Free and Fair'?", *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 8, no. 3, 1997, p. 35.

⁹ Michael Lewis-Beck and Tom Rice, "Forecasting Presidential Elections: A Comparison of Naïve Models", *Political Behavior*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1984, p. 10.

¹⁰ Vicente Reyes, *Corruption and Implementation: Case Studies in Philippine Public Administration*, Quezon City, National College of Public Administration and Governance, University of the Philippines, 2009.

Table 1. Final Results Senators May 2010 Philippine Elections (Only top 12 qualify as Senators)

Candidate	Party Affiliation	Votes
Bong Revilla	Dominant Majority (LAKAS-KAMPI)	19,513,521
Jinggoy Estrada	Accredited Party (<i>Partido ng Masang Pilipino</i>)	18,925,925
Miriam Defensor		
Santiago	Accredited Party (<i>Partido ng Repormang Pilipino</i> PRP)	17,344,742
Franklin Drilon	Dominant Minority (Liberal Party)	15,871,117
Juan Ponce Enrile	Accredited Party (<i>Partido ng Masang Pilipino</i> -PMP)	15,665,618
Pia Cayetano	Accredited Party (<i>Nacionalista</i> Party-NP)	13,679,511
Ferdinand Marcos, Jr.	Accredited Party (<i>Nacionalista</i> Party-NP)	13,169,634
Ralph Recto	Dominant Minority (Liberal Party)	12,436,960
Vicente Sotto III	Accredited Party (National Peoples' Coalition-NPC)	11,891,711
Sergio Osmeña III	Independent	11,656,668
Lito Lapid	Dominant Majority (LAKAS-KAMPI)	11,025,805
Teofisto Guingona III	Dominant Minority (Liberal Party)	10,277,352

Source: (Commission on Elections, 2010).

The Philippine Context: Electoral Engineering And The Case Of The May 2010 Automated Election System (AES)

The continuing effort of the COMELEC to reform the Philippine electoral system is an example of electoral engineering. Modifications of current electoral systems can be described as processes in which the vital democratic principles where “consent and representation are translated into reality” through a systematic “method of converting votes cast by electors into seats in a legislature”.¹¹ Electoral engineering is resorted to in order to maintain and preserve people’s trust in electoral exercises. Achieving trust or what the literature refers to as electoral integrity, is vital as it accomplishes two essential democratic principles: “popular acceptance of the outcome” of elections and the consolidation of the “authority of elected officials and the government”.¹² In the Philippine case, one can argue quite compellingly that the chronic incidences of “electoral malpractices are predicted to undermine feelings of political legitimacy, eroding citizen’s confidence in the electoral process and electoral authorities”.¹³ The AES as it was implemented for the May 2010 elections is an example of electoral engineering where the rules (in electoral engineering terms this is also referred to as structure) were modified in order to bring about a

¹¹ Vernon Bogdanor, "Introduction," in *Democracy and Elections Electoral Systems and Their Political Consequences*, ed. Vernon Bogdanor and David Butler, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 1.

¹² Pippa Norris, *Electoral Engineering: Voting ... cit.*, p. 15.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

different set of incentives that could possibly modify political behaviour of all stakeholders involved (in electoral engineering terms, this also referred to as culture). Norris contends that the convergence of structure and culture necessary for changes to happen via electoral engineering is full of uncertainty:

Essentially, rational-choice institutionalism assumes that formal electoral rules have a substantial impact upon the strategic incentives facing politicians, parties and citizens, so that changing the formal rules has the capacity to alter political behaviour. Yet it remains unclear how much formal rules and strategic incentives matter in comparison with deep-rooted cultural “habits of the heart” arising from the process of societal modernization; and we know even less about how structure and culture interact¹⁴.

But does electoral engineering really bring about changes in the structure and culture of electoral practices? If one goes by the record of established democracies, there is not enough to go by. In the last fifty years, “only six cases of major reforms”¹⁵ have been carried out in established democracies. The reason for the rarity can be traced to political will (or the lack of it). The decision to adopt electoral engineering as a major reform initiative is usually made by politicians who “usually control the electoral system and those politicians with the power to change the system are typically precisely those who benefit from it and therefore want to keep it unchanged”¹⁶. Owing to the paucity of electoral reform examples, the Philippine AES thus becomes a unique case. This exploratory article investigates the implementation efficacy of the AES as an electoral engineering reform initiative.

Obstacles To Political Reform – Electoral Distortion

In an asymmetrical relationship, the variable affecting change is the electoral distortion characterized by the Filipino behaviour of patrimonialism as exemplified by patron-client relationship, personalism, money politics, *pakikisama* (camaraderie) system and *utang na* (debt of gratitude) that transforms the government into a weak state of equilibrium of corrupt rent seeking motives as the consequent variable¹⁷.

In a situation where asymmetrical relationships seem to determine distortions in Philippine elections, much needed change particularly in curbing corruption becomes absolutely vital: Given the high-stakes nature of electoral

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

¹⁵ Alan Renwick, *The Politics of Electoral Reform: Changing the Rules of Democracy*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 10.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ Luisito Villanueva, "Philippine Electoral Distortion and Perpetuation of Corruption in Government", *Forum of International Development Studies*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2002, p. 62.

spoils, “reformers need to reclaim the original justification of campaign finance reform: not as a guarantor of structured democratic deliberation *before* the election, but as an effort to assure that certain powerful groups do not exercise undue influence on its *outcome*”¹⁸. It has been argued that in Philippine politics, the elites or entrenched political clans perpetuate their “patrimonial connections”¹⁹ and their stranglehold on power through elections²⁰; thus, electoral reform must be designed as “protecting against any one powerful group accumulating too much influence over the nation’s politics”²¹.

Reforming the electoral system as well as reviewing the highly centralized unitary state and presidential form of government and the prevailing party system become imperatives in achieving political transformation²². Moreover, these critical areas of election reform have long been recognized by scholars and practitioners as fundamental in overhauling Philippine politics. Two powerful deterrents to much-needed wholesale reform particularly in the area of election distortion persist as daunting obstacles: the monopoly of elites and the high cost of popular participation.

The current electoral system particularly for the nationally elected office of member of the house of senate (Senate) and the locally elected office of member of the house of representatives (Congress) restrict current legislators to “three consecutive rather than three terms in a lifetime” allowing “entrenched political families” to be able to manipulate and cycle their way “between national and local offices”²³. Thus, the election for legislators is a merry-go-round, allowing political dynasties to grow, be fostered and to be continually resurrected. Several attempts have been made to address these weaknesses. Examples of these would be the introduction of party-list elections, which would have allowed greater popular participation, and representation and a move away from favoring entrenched elites. However, the staunch and stubborn resistance of members of congress aligned with elites led to the unfortunate debacle of “the 1998 party-list elections manifesting the great extent to which legislators sabotaged reform efforts”²⁴. The 1998 local elections – as usual

¹⁸ Frank Pasquale, "Reclaiming Egalitarianism in the Political Theory of Campaign Finance Reform", *University of Illinois Law Review*, no. 2, 2008, p. 601.

¹⁹ Shamsul Haque, "Theory and Practice of Public Administration in Southeast Asia: Traditions, Directions, and Impacts", *International Journal of Public Administration*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2007, p. 1315.

²⁰ Julio Teehankee, "And the Clans Play On", in *Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism*, Quezon City, Philippines, Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 2007.

²¹ Frank Pasquale, "Reclaiming Egalitarianism ... cit.", 602.

²² Kent Eaton, "Restoration or Transformation? 'Trapos' Versus Ngos in the Democratization of the Philippines", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 62, no. 2, 2003.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 482.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 486.

turned to patronage politics -- disregarding policy, thus "many local officials" ignored "the local bodies on which Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) sit" effectively making the party-list system in 1998 inutile. The cycle of election distortion specifically for positions in the Senate and Congress is perpetuated where "the high cost of getting elected serves as a disincentive for popular participation and an incentive for corruption"²⁵.

However, for the highly-coveted national post of President, the reform trajectory has been different: "The Philippines is the only presidential democracy in the world using a plurality-rule electoral system to select its chief executive that has experienced a dramatic change in that system"²⁶. One of the aftermaths of the 1986 EDSA Revolution²⁷ and as a harsh reaction to the two-decade reign of Marcos punctuated by a disputed re-election and a declaration of martial law was the institutionalization of term limitations (one-term) for the President, enshrined in the 1986 Philippine constitution. This electoral reform complemented with the plurality-rule system has engendered a unique variant of individualistic patron-client relations:

First, the single-term limitation increases the effective number of candidates in plurality, rule-based elections because none of the individuals running has the incumbency advantage. Such a limitation significantly lowers the cost of loss since a loser in one election is granted another opportunity to run soon. Third, it shortens the cycle of elite circulation as a greater number of persons will have served as president in a given period. Fourth, the time horizon of the players in presidential contests shortens, making it more difficult to coordinate candidacies. In general, shortsighted players find it harder to cooperate with one another or create strong comradeship. Under plurality rule with a single-term limitation, prospective presidential candidates have a strong incentive to campaign independently instead of joining forces with other candidates²⁸.

Electoral reforms designed to dismantle the monopoly of the elites and lessen the costs of popular participation have achieved mixed results. The elites still operate and lord it over the presidential derby. But the May 2010 elections saw an increase in the number of presidential candidates not necessarily coming from the elites. This increase in the number of candidates for President cannot be solely attributed to the lowering of costs for popular participation but is "more likely to be related to a failure of national level elites to coordinate with

²⁵ Julio Teehankee, "Electoral Politics in the Philippines", in *Electoral Politics in Southeast and East Asia*, ed. A. Croissant, G. Bruns, and M. John, Singapore, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2002, p. 195.

²⁶ Jungug Choi, "Philippine Democracies Old and New: Elections, Term Limits, and Party Systems", *Asian Survey*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2001, p. 488.

²⁷ EDSA stands for *Epifanio de los Santos Avenue*, the major arterial road in Metro Manila that was the site of the peaceful 1986 revolt that effectively forced out the late President Ferdinand Marcos from power and towards his exile in Hawaii.

²⁸ Jungug Choi, "Philippine Democracies Old and New: Elections, Term Limits, and Party Systems", p. 499.

one another”²⁹. Using a patron-client framework, one may conclude that Philippine elections are still dominated by elite interests. However, this inquiry proposes that these dominant paradigms may be too limited and may not be able to capture some of the more important nuances occurring in Philippine elections.

This inquiry contends that patron-client relations in the tradition of Lande³⁰ is still present and has actually become even more prominent in contemporary times³¹. Recent Philippine studies have reaffirmed the continuance of patron-client ties. In an empirical study measuring the linkages between influential local and national level politicians, Ravanilla and Hicken argue that in the Philippines “maintaining ties with local elites has been shown to be an effective channel for upper level politicians including senators to mobilize electoral support”³². Recognising the fragmentation of Philippine politics, Querubin’s empirical research contends that “political dynasties emerge as the natural unit of political organization in democracies where political parties traditionally have been weak”³³.

Moreover, patronage politics by the previous Ferdinand Marcos regime described as plunder³⁴ and crony capitalism³⁵ act as a powerful predictor determining electoral outcomes. Intriguingly, prominent figures clearly aligned with the corrupt Marcos regime have successfully established a remarkable comeback during the May 10 national and local elections: Ferdinand Marcos, Jr., was elected a first-time member of the Philippine senate, Ms. Imee Marcos, the eldest daughter of the late Marcos strongman, was elected as Governor of the Province of *Ilocos Norte* and last but certainly not the least, Madame Imelda Marcos who to date has not been convicted of any of the 910 corruption cases filed against her³⁶, was elected into the Philippine congress representing *Ilocos*

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 497.

³⁰ Carl Lande, "Leaders, Factions and Parties: The Structure of Philippine Politics", in *Monograph Series No. 6, Southeast Asia Studies*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1965.

³¹ Amado Doronila, "The Transformation of Patron-Client Relations and Its Political Consequences in Postwar Philippines", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1, 1985.

³² Nico Ravanilla and Allen Hicken, "Bringing Home the Pork When Home Is the Entire National Electorate: Reelection Incentives of Senators of the Philippines" (paper presented at the APSA 2012 Annual Conference Meeting, New Orleans, 17-19 February 2012), p. 24.

³³ Pablo Querubin, "Political Reform and Elite Persistence: Term Limits and Political Dynasties in the Philippines" (paper presented at the APSA 2012 Annual Conference Meeting, New Orleans, 17-19 February 2012), p. 27.

³⁴ Belinda Aquino, *Politics of Plunder: The Philippines under Marcos*, Quezon City, Great Books, 1987.

³⁵ John Andrews, "From Riches to Rags: Corruption and Cronysim in the Marcos Era", in *The Economist*, 1988.

³⁶ Jim Gomez, "Imelda Marcos Sure She'll Beat Corruption Charges", *The Associated Press*, 3 July 2009.

Norte. But perhaps the most stunning development in the May 10 elections was the uncanny performance of ex-president Joseph Estrada convicted of plunder and subsequently pardoned³⁷ coming in second in the Presidential derby garnering 26% of the votes and eventually winning the post of Manila mayor in 2013. In a 2004 Transparency International Report, the Philippines acquired the dubious distinction of having two ex-Presidents: Ferdinand Marcos and Joseph Ejercito Estrada³⁸ as members of the notorious 10 most corrupt leaders³⁹. It is also worth mentioning that ex-President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo was charged with the grave offence of plunder and was put under house arrest for several years for alleged misuse of the Philippine Charity and Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) funds⁴⁰. In July 2016, the Philippine Supreme Court dismissed the plunder case against Arroyo in relation to the PCSO scandal. It must be pointed out that of the current sitting judges of the Philippine Supreme Court, “9 of the 15 were her appointees”⁴¹. Ex-President Arroyo who ran during the same May 2010 elections and emerged victorious as a representative of the second district of San Fernando City in the country’s north but who spent the last six years under house arrest has recently been elevated to the position of deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives⁴². Is it possible to consider that in a Philippine context voters are “simply not discerning enough to be able to reasonably and rationally evaluate government”⁴³ as posited by some scholars? It seems to be the case that in the Philippines; allegations of corruption do not inhibit candidates from winning elections. Was the electoral engineering reform initiative, driven primarily by automation of elections, successful? This article purports that like most elections in the Philippines – it has been a paradoxical experience.

Theoretical Framework: Interrogating Dominant Patron-Client Theories

Viewing Philippine politics from a predominantly patron-client paradigm can be attributed to Carl Lande who conducted groundbreaking work

³⁷ Tetch Torres, "Estrada Gilty of Plunder; Perjury Rap Dropped", *Inquirer.net*, 9 Sept. 2007.

³⁸ It must be noted that in the Philippine local elections for 2013, the convicted and pardoned Estrada won the vote for Mayor of the capital city of the Philippines – Manila.

³⁹ Robin Hodess et al., "Global Corruption Report 2004", London, Pluto Press, 2004.

⁴⁰ Leila Salaverria, "Arroyo Charged with Plunder in Misuse of PcsO Funds", *Inquirer.net*, 17 July 2012.

⁴¹ Reynaldo Santos, "What Has Happened to the Arroyo Plunder Case?", *Rappler: In-Depth*, 2016, <http://www.rappler.com/newsbreak/in-depth/119812-gloria-arroyo-plunder-case-supreme-court>.

⁴² Marc Cayabyab, "Arroyo Now a Deputy Speaker", *Inquirer.net*, 10 August 2016.

⁴³ Shaun Bowler and Jeffrey Karp, "Politicians, Scandals, and Trust in Government", *Political Behavior*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2004.

on the idiosyncrasies of Philippine electoral politics⁴⁴. Contemporary analysis of Philippine politics has been reduced somewhat into a dominant “patron-client” paradigm. Lemarchand and Legg extended the analysis by highlighting more expansive clientage networks involving “an aggregate of role sets, serially linked in such a way that a patron also stands in the position of a client toward his superior.”⁴⁵ The epitome of these patron-client and clientage networks is the persistence of political dynasty.

The Philippines plurality-rule electoral system and the consequent characteristics of political parties differ from the “two-ballot majority system” that produces relatively secure multiparty alliances⁴⁶. Due to the fluid nature of the Philippine electoral contests shaped by term-limitations – described as “mechanical effects” and driven by elite interests – elaborated upon as “psychological factors”⁴⁷ political parties are fragmented. Unlike most electoral systems in the developed Western world which have historically-rich, institutionalized systems with clear party lines or even “bipolar multipartism” as envisioned by Duverger⁴⁸, the Philippines typifies unstable coalitions. The fragmented Philippine electoral system continues to be a paradox since most of its features such as individual ballot structure (personal vote); pre-determined and low district magnitudes particularly for Congress and a reformed electoral formula represented by term limitations designed to limit incumbency advantage are key ingredients of electoral systems that are effective in deterring corruption⁴⁹. Yet despite these, Philippine elections and its party system are still inherently fragmented, unstable and prone to corruption.

Notwithstanding its fragmented nature, Philippine elections have also seen the emergence of fresh political players. Media, or what Diamond describes as a form of “liberation technology”⁵⁰ has made its unmistakable presence felt in Philippine politics. As early as the 1998 Presidential contests and in the 2007 national elections, the potent influence of media has visibly

⁴⁴ Carl Lande, *Leaders, Factions and Parties: The Structure of Philippine Politics*, Monograph Series No. 6, Southeast Asia Studies, Yale University, Monograph Series, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1965.

⁴⁵ Rene Lemarchand and Keith Legg, “Political Clientelism and Development: A Preliminary Analysis”, *Comparative Politics*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1972.

⁴⁶ Maurice Duverger, “Duverger’s Law: Forty Years Later”, in *Electoral Laws and Their Political Consequences*, ed. B. Grofman and A. Lijphart, Riverside Drive, NY, Algora Publishing, 2003, p. 70.

⁴⁷ Kenneth Benoit, “Duverger’s Law and the Study of Electoral Systems”, *French Politics*, vol. no. 4, 2006, p. 72.

⁴⁸ Maurice Duverger, “Duverger’s Law: Forty ... cit.”, p. 83.

⁴⁹ Torsten Persson, Guido Tabellini, and Francesco Trebbi, “Electoral Rules and Corruption”, *Journal of the European Economic Association*, vol. 1, no. 4, 2003.

⁵⁰ Larry Diamond, “Liberation Technology,” *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2010, p. 69.

grown⁵¹. The 2010 elections saw the explosion of online journalism, which provided a broader and more in-depth access to the population⁵². Coronel points out that modern day elections have become a battleground for political aspirants who “make their appeal and propagate their messages through the media”⁵³. Alongside, media, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) have also played a key role in the safeguarding of elections and more importantly in the exercise of militant democracy in the country⁵⁴. Another key player in the evolving democratic characteristic of the Philippines is without doubt the Catholic Church, which has been described as “one big NGO”⁵⁵. Contrary to a modernist viewpoint that suggests Philippine elections is at a period of transition moving towards a more consolidated elite-dominated democratic form, this inquiry argues that greater analytical illumination is achieved by interrogating this phenomenon as it is: unpredictable and paradoxical and very much a product of its unique context.

The literature on elections and campaign finance reform is replete with various accounts of the impact of corruption on the vote. Taking note of the unique Philippine presidential electoral system and the nationally elected Senators and members of Congress; one sees Kunicova and Rose-Ackerman’s prediction: proportional representation systems together with presidentialism are associated with higher levels of corrupt political rent-seeking⁵⁶. Furthermore, this unpredictability favours “electoral uncertainty” which consequently “encourages politicians to corruption activities under electoral

⁵¹ For more information, see Rey Rosales and Dennis Lowry, "Online News Framing: A Content Analysis of the Coverage of Three Manila Online Newspapers During the 1998 Philippine Presidential Election," *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, vol. 10, no. 1 (2000); and Kavita Karan, Jacques Gimeno, and Edson Tandoc, "The Internet and Mobile Technologies in Election Campaigns: The Gabriela Women's Party During the 2007 Philippine Elections", *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, vol. 6, no. 3-4, 2009.

⁵² CMFR., "Online Coverage of 2010 Elections: Citizen Journalists at Work.", 2010, <http://cmfr-phil.org/mediaandelections/2010-elections/online-coverage-of-2010-elections-citizen-journalists-at-work-2/>.

⁵³ Sheila Coronel, "The Role of Media in Deepening Democracy", 2001, p. 13.

⁵⁴ The work of Clarke highlights the importance of NGOs in democratisation in Asia and more specifically in the Philippines. For more information, see Gerald Clarke, *The Politics of Ngos in Southeast Asia: Participation and Protest in the Philippines*, Routledge, New York, 2006.

⁵⁵ Coeli Barry, "The Limits of Conservative Church Reformism In The Democratic Philippines", in *Religious Organizations and Democratization: Case Studies from Contemporary Asia*, ed. Tun-Jen Cheng and Deborah Brown, New York, M.E. Sharpe, 2015, p. 158.

⁵⁶ Jana Kunicova and Susan Rose-Ackerman, "Electoral Rules and Constitutional Structures as Constraints on Corruption", *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 35, 2006.

systems that are dominated by the personal vote”⁵⁷. The systemic nature of corruption permeating Philippine contexts and the nature and operating system of voting contribute to the persistence of electoral distortions.

Reflecting on the May 2010 Philippine elections that saw stunning victories of relatives of the late-President Marcos, judged by history as a corrupt and autocratic despot, and the second-place finish of ex-President Estrada, convicted of corruption and plunder (and subsequently granted a Presidential pardon) – one sees how political corruption is inimitably intertwined in Philippine elections. Scholars and practitioners have argued that one powerful reason for the presence of such a phenomenon is that “political corruption becomes a necessary evil” as a result of “fierce competition for campaign funds”⁵⁸. But is the necessary evil so compelling as to prevent voters from penalizing corrupt candidates and rewarding honest and hardworking ones? The return to power of the Marcoses and the impressive electoral resurgence of Estrada seem to indicate that corrupt candidates are rewarded and not penalized. Or could the victories of candidates convicted of corruption be due to voter ignorance and misperception; or perhaps the voters were benefiting from patron-client relations consistent with implicit trading theories or it may just be that they were not venal voters and that electoral retribution was not high in their agenda?⁵⁹ In a Philippine context with systemic corruption and electoral distortion; it can be argued that the voting choice is complex:

Alleged corruption is, in fact, only one of many factors that voters consider when casting their ballot. The “trading” argument... is able to explain why so many allegedly corrupt candidates do win, contrary to the hopes and expectations of ancient and modern theorists of democracy, yet it does not assume that all or most voters are venally looking after their own interests. Instead, it argues that a charge of corruption is only one factor that a rational voter will take into account; if the allegedly corrupt act was minor and the candidate has other, overriding virtues in the voters’ eyes, such as appropriate stands on the issues and the right party affiliation, then the act will be ignored or rationalized away⁶⁰.

The Philippine Political Culture

David questions the vise-like grip that “Philippine values” has on politics and society. He underscores the prevailing cultural essentialism permeating the language of political studies in the country. David identifies the

⁵⁷ Eric Chang, "Electoral Incentives for Political Corruption under Open List Proportional Representation", *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 67, no. 3, 2005, p. 719.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 716.

⁵⁹ John Peters and Susan Welch, "The Effects of Charges of Corruption on Voting Behavior in Congressional Elections", *The American Political Science Review*, vol. 74, no. 3, 1980.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 706.

pitfalls of development studies from a Philippine sociological perspective and suggests the need to disassociate scholarship from prevailing stereotypical strains in order for genuine Philippine development studies to flourish⁶¹. Iletto and his admonitions of an analysis of Philippine history and politics trapped in a modernist “concept of development”—echoes points raised by David—and is another voice demanding a critical re-examination. Iletto’s arguments are highly instructive and form an integral source serving as a lynchpin for the proposed analytical framework of this inquiry. He reiterates the almost ubiquitous influence of what he describes as a flawed “concept of development” that by itself is “trapped” in a modernist discourse⁶². Critiquing the overriding scope of patron-client language on political culture, he laments how “Lande’s 1965 classic continues to haunt subsequent texts, including those that seek to debunk it.” He challenges present scholarship and proposes opening up a “new path in Philippine political studies” that are divorced from subject positionings of individuals⁶³.

Electoral Reforms And Corruption: Changes And Continuities

Is there any basis in making claims about the continuities of patron-client linkages in the Philippines? In attempting to test this hypothesis Rivera conducted an empirical analysis of Philippine politics and discovered that “not surprisingly, the elections between 1987 and 2010 provide a dramatic proof of the continuing dominance and resilience of ‘political families’ in the country”⁶⁴. Cook identified what he described as two enduring “structural continuities of Philippine politics, corruption scandals,” that has dominated political rhetoric “and the reallocation of political energy and focus to the next presidential and congressional elections”⁶⁵.

This article interrogates patron-client and clientage networks as dominant theoretical foundations explaining the nature of corruption and how this exacerbates election distortions. The argument of Khan embodies this: “Developing country states typically operate through patron-client relationships with key sectors of

⁶¹ Randolph David, *Reflections on Sociology and Philippine Society*, Quezon City, University of the Philippines Press, 2001.

⁶² Reynaldo Iletto, "Outlines of a Nonlinear Emplotment of Philippine History" in *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*, ed. L. Lowe and D. Lloyd, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 1997, p. 98.

⁶³ "On Sidel's Response and Bossism in the Philippines", *Philippine Political Science Journal*, vol. 46, no. 23, 2002, p. 170.

⁶⁴ Temario Rivera, "In Search of Credible Elections and Parties: The Philippine Paradox", in *Chasing the Wind: Assessing Philippine Democracy*, ed. Felipe Miranda, et al., Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines: Commission on Human Rights, Philippines, 2011, p. 62.

⁶⁵ Malcolm Cook, "The Philippines in 2014: The More Things Stay the Same", *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 2015, p. 269.

society. State leaderships operate through these networks to *implement* their economic and political strategies and to *negotiate* change in rights⁶⁶. The satisfaction of particularistic interests among patrons and clients, which in many ways can be interpreted as corrupt activities, complicates Philippine electoral distortions dampening attempts at reform. It is the predominance of such patron-client and clientage linkages that determine the political nature of developing countries – such as the Philippines.

Patron-client relations as a dominant theory is complemented by the paradigm of local chieftains or bossism⁶⁷ and its close kin espousing a symbiosis of systemic criminal activities vis-à-vis politics not merely on a local but on a national level⁶⁸. Iletto, and David's, theoretical challenge to this dominance finds resonance with Quimpo's contested democracy:

An alternative paradigm of contested democracy is more appropriate in explaining Philippine politics today... A contested democracy approach acknowledges that colonial and postcolonial elite rule constitutes a single continuous seam in Philippine politics yet contends that they are not the only important thread. The fight against hierarchical structures – the struggle for independence and for popular empowerment or democracy from below – is the other major running thread⁶⁹.

This inquiry posits that a more nuanced appreciation and understanding of the nexus of corruption and election reform can be derived by viewing the phenomenon from a wider lens that accommodates dominant paradigms as well as localised contestations of democracy. *Change* or attempted reforms in the electoral system is heavily influenced by *Continuities* exemplified by persistent electoral distortions.

The May 2010 Automated Elections: An Exploratory Analysis

How successful indeed was the first ever synchronized automated election⁷⁰ in the Philippines? The speed of the counting of votes, their transmission and the rapidness of counting election results were unheard of in

⁶⁶ Mushtaq Khan, "The Efficiency Implications of Corruption," *Journal of International Development*, vol. 8, no. 5, 1996, p. 692.

⁶⁷ John Sidel, *Capital, Coercion and Crime: Bossism in the Philippines*, California, Stanford University Press, 1999.

⁶⁸ Peter Kreuzer, "Philippine Governance: Merging Politics and Crime", in *PRIF-Reports*, no. 93, Frankfurt, Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, 2009.

⁶⁹ Nathan Quimpo, "Review: Oligarchic Patrimonialism, Bossism, Electoral Clientelism, and Contested Democracy in the Philippines", *Comparative Politics*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2005, p. 250.

⁷⁰ The Commission on Elections (COMELEC) completed the first, nationwide fully automated elections –from counting of votes to transmission and counting of election returns.

Philippine elections. Incredibly, the general populace was already able to determine the winners only after one or two days. Previous experiences of long, drawn out manual canvassing and allegations of *dagdag-bawas*⁷¹ or “vote padding” and “vote shaving” irregularities virtually disappeared⁷². External observers commented that the Philippine election exercise was acceptable⁷³. Moreover, some observers even clearly identified the probable reasons for the seeming success: “Philippine elections a success, people should be declared the heroes”⁷⁴. Notwithstanding the apparent success of the automation of the May 2010 elections, its true impact is still tentative. The history of the eventual awarding of the contract for election automation is controversial: Abiding by a “new law (Republic Act No. 9369) approved in 2007 that sought the automation of elections in the country”, the COMELEC conducted a controversial bidding process for the automated election system (AES) for the May 2010 synchronized national and local election” which was eventually won by Smartmatic-TIM after having been “initially disqualified”⁷⁵.

Reflecting on the impact of the automation of the May 2010 elections given the uncertain nature of this particularly novel electoral reform becomes imperative. “Electronic voting is still a relatively young technology and no consensus has yet emerged” about how effective and efficient it truly is⁷⁶. Although there have been claims about the advantages of electronic voting “such as ease of counting, ease of voting and fraud prevention” evidence about all these have yet to be established⁷⁷.

Five key questions form the central lines of inquiry for this exploration as to the purported success of electoral reforms:

1. Has automated elections fostered genuine political competition?
2. Or have the entrenched and oftentimes debilitating patron-client relations in Philippine elections disappeared or at least minimized with automated elections?

⁷¹ This literally means “to add and to subtract”. Such malpractice was alleged to have occurred during the 1995 senatorial elections.

⁷² Ambeth Ocampo, “First Case of “Dagdag-Bawas”?”, *Inquirer.net*, 16 June 2007.

⁷³ Manuel Mogato, “Asian Observers Say Philippine Polls Acceptable”, *Reuters*, 13 May 2010.

⁷⁴ Jerome Aning, Angelo Cabrera, and Dyan Ruiz, “People Heroes in Poll Success, Say Foreign Observers”, *Inquirer.net*, 2010, p. 1.

⁷⁵ Temairo Rivera, “In Search of ... cit.”, p. 56.

⁷⁶ Jarrett Blanc, “Electronic Voting”, in *Challenging the Norms and Standards of Election Administration*, ed. International Foundation for Electoral Systems, Washington, D.C., United States Aid Agency (USAID), 2007, p. 11.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

3. Does corruption – long been described as systemic⁷⁸ and its impact on elections been curbed or at least checked as a result of the automation?
4. How has media made an impact on election reforms?
5. Has support for the automation of elections by the candidates been translated to electoral success?

This exploratory inquiry analyses the first ever synchronized automated elections held on May 2010 described as “successful in contributing to enhanced public confidence in the electoral process”⁷⁹. The analysis attempts to model possible relationships between the outcome variable and the predictor variables. For purposes of this exploratory case study, the main geographical research area is the Philippine’s National Capital Region (NCR). NCR is the smallest of the nation’s administrative regions, the most populous and serves as the seat of the national government making it the focal concentration point of economic, social and political activities in the Philippines. The population of NCR is around 10.7 million and it is classified as a 100% urban region⁸⁰.

The outcome variable is the electoral votes won by candidates (Votes). These figures have been compiled from the official election returns available from the COMELE⁸¹. The predictor variables are classified into two types: continuous and categorical (dummy) variables. The continuous variable is: The level of news report (NewsReport) coverage by mainstream media over a limited time period during the campaign of the candidates compiled for this inquiry⁸²; The categorical (dummy) variables are: Allegations of corruption (CorrCharge)⁸³ compiled from the official records of the Philippines’ House of Representatives and the Senate of the Philippines⁸⁴; Whether the candidates

⁷⁸ Ledivina Cariño, G. Iglesias, and M. Mendoza, "Initiatives Taken against Corruption: The Philippine Case", in *Programme for Accountability and Transparency (PACT) of the Management Development and Governance Division*, United Nations Development Programme, 1998.

⁷⁹ Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL), "International Election Observation Mission Philippines National and Local Elections 2010 Interim Report", Bangkok, Asian Network for Free Elections, 2010, p. 9.

⁸⁰ Maria Corazon De la Paz and Lisa Colson, "Population, Health and Environment Issues in the Philippines", in *A Profile of the National Capital Region*, Washington, D.C., Population Reference Bureau, 2008.

⁸¹ Commission on Elections, "Automation of the 2010 National and Local Elections", 2010, http://www.comelec.gov.ph/modernization/2010_natl_local/automation_timelines.html.

⁸² Che De los Reyes, "Pre-Campaign Clutter or Spin Central? War on the Air Waves: 6 Top Bets Spend P1b on 'Pol Ads'", in *Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism*, Quezon City, Philippines, Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 2010.

⁸³ This inquiry is exploratory in nature. Thus it is aware of the possibility of misidentifying confounding factors with the use of dummy variables as pointed out by other scholars and practitioners. See Bowler and Karp, "Politicians, Scandals, and Trust in Government".

⁸⁴ PulseAsia, "Pulse Asia's January 2010 Pre-Election Survey: Trust Ratings of Selected Public Figures and Groups and Electoral Endorsements for President in the May 2010 Elections", Quezon City, Philippines, Pulse Asia, Inc., 2010.

were running for re-election (Re-election) compiled from official records of the Philippines' House of Representatives;⁸⁵ The regional affiliation (i.e. Luzon, Visayas or Mindanao) of the candidates (Region) compiled from the Philippines' House of Representatives⁸⁶; Whether the candidates belonged to Political Dynasties (Dynasties) as culled from various sources⁸⁷; Moreover, this inquiry adopts Rivera's definition of membership of political dynasty as a candidate who belongs to "a political family" which has "at least two members of the same family (typically up to the third degree of consanguinity) having won a congressional and/or gubernatorial seat between 1987 and 2010"⁸⁸; The candidates political party affiliation (i.e. Incumbent Party, Opposition Party or Other parties) represented by (Party) as culled from campaign materials of the candidates⁸⁹ and; The level of support or non-support of the Candidates towards the Automation of Elections (Automation) as compiled from candidates platforms as well from the Catholic Bishops Conference Elections Watch documents⁹⁰.

This exploration hypothesizes that votes garnered by the senatorial candidates (Votes) is a dependent variable resulting from the interplay of the main independent variables pertaining to (a) features of the election system itself and (b) allegations of corruption. This will be shown by using multiple regressions, which aim to derive a mathematical equation or an estimated regression line, depicting significant relationships between independent and the dependent variables. This inquiry recognizes that multiple regressions are at best an indication of correlations that exist between key variables. Causal relationships or whether or not the independent variables in this inquiry cause changes in the dependent variable can best be achieved by conducting experiments (or quasi-experiments). For this exploratory inquiry, what is being attempted is primarily a cross-sectional, correlational study.

⁸⁵ House of Representatives, "Member Information - 14th Congress", in *House of Representatives, 14th Congress*, Quezon City, Philippines, Information and Communications Technology Service, 2010.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁷ Sheila Coronel, "The Seven Ms of Dynasty Building", in *Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism*, Quezon City, Philippines, Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, 2007; Ernesto Dal Bo, Pedro Dal Bo, and Jason Snyder, "Political Dynasties", in *NBER Working Paper Series, Working Paper 13122*, Cambridge, MA, National Bureau of Economic Research, 2007; Temario. Rivera, "Landlords and Capitalists: Class, Family, and State in Philippine Manufacturing", Quezon City, Philippines, University of the Philippines Press and Philippine Center for Policy Studies, 1994.

⁸⁸ Temaira Rivera, "In Search of ... cit.", p. 61.

⁸⁹ House of Representatives, "Member Information - 14th Congress".

⁹⁰ Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP). "Election 2010", ed. National Secretariat for Social Action Justice And Peace, Manila, Philippines, CBCP, 2010.

This is represented in the hypothesised formula below:

$$y\text{OUTPUT}_t = \alpha + \phi \text{ELECTION} + \kappa \text{CORRUPTION} + \mu_t$$

In specific hypothesised terms:

$$y\text{OUTPUT}_t = \alpha + \lambda X_1 + \chi X_2 + \sigma X_3 + \delta X_4 + \varepsilon X_5 + \phi X_6 + \phi X_7 + \mu_t$$

The indicators used for this analysis are:

OUTPUT – Votes – A continuous variable denoting official votes garnered during the May 2010 Automated elections. This variable underwent log transformation⁹¹ in order to fulfill conditions of data analysis⁹².

X₁ – Re-election – A dummy variable representing whether candidate is running for re-election (1) or not (0).

X₂ – Political Party – A dummy variable representing the Political Party affiliation of the candidate⁹³.

X₃ – Region – A dummy variable representing the Regional affiliation⁹⁴ of the candidate (Ando, 1969).

X₄ – Dynasty – A dummy variable representing whether the candidate is a member of a political dynasty (1) or not (0).

X₅ – CorrCharge – Documented allegations of corruption filed against the candidate before the courts (1) or if no allegation nor cases filed (0).

X₆ – NewsReport – A continuous variable measuring the amount of exclusive news coverage by mainstream media⁹⁵ during the campaign period⁹⁶.

⁹¹ The dependent variable “Votes” is a continuous variable that ran up to the millions (eight to seven digit figures), whereas some of the independent variables are dichotomous (i.e. membership in a political dynasty, allegations of corruption). Because of this, the raw data proved to be highly-skewed. Employing the log transformation was able to overcome the skewness and allowed for better handling of the data.

⁹² Peter Hall, “On the Removal of Skewness by Transformation”, *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society Series B (Methodological)*, vol. 54, no. 1, 1992.

⁹³ The incumbent party refers to the party-in-power during the 2010 elections. Party 1 referred to (Lakas-KAMPI) while Party 2 and 3 refer to Liberal Party and Other Accredited Major Parties (i.e. NP, NPC, LDP, PMP, PDP-Laban).

⁹⁴ The seminal work of Ando “the Study of Voting Patterns in the Philippine Presidential and Senatorial Elections, 1946-1965” makes claims that given three variables: (1) political party, (2) socio-economic status and (3) cultural-linguistic-affiliation, the third is the most powerful predictor. Since this proposed manuscript looks into voting patterns, it was necessary to test earlier theoretical positions in relation to variables that predicted votes.

⁹⁵ The NewsReport variable comes mainly from the CMFR 2010 report. The mainstream media reported in the CMFR report pertained primarily to TV stations. The “exclusive” adjective refers to news items that pertain directly to the candidates during the elections and not about other related news items. Moreover, the period that was monitored by the CMFR only covered from February 9, 2010 (the official start of the campaign period) till the February 26, 2010.

X₇ – Support for Automation Law – A dummy variable representing the candidate's support (or non-support) of the Automation Law for the Elections.

Abramovitz *et al.* reported a strong relation between incumbency and re-election rates, results of this inquiry support this finding⁹⁷. Also, Stewart and Clarke hypothesized strong effects of leader images on party choice, results of this inquiry contribute to this ongoing discussion⁹⁸. Dal Bo *et al.* reported on the self-perpetuating characteristics of political dynasties, results of this inquiry reinforce these arguments⁹⁹. Villanueva concludes that corruption is an entrenched and necessary feature of Philippine elections, this inquiry partially acknowledges this notion¹⁰⁰. Petersson *et al.* reported on the importance of media in Swedish elections, results from this inquiry give credence to some of their conclusions¹⁰¹. The five key questions earlier identified will now be addressed in this section.

Discussion And Results

One of the fundamental questions raised in this exploratory inquiry was whether or not the automation of elections fostered genuine political competition, defined in this exploratory inquiry as free (voters can exercise their right and are not coerced in any way) and fair (parties compete on a level playing field). For this exploratory inquiry, comparisons of actual voter turnout from 2004 till 2013, are presented in Table 2. Introducing automation of elections in 2010 seemed to have resulted to an increase in participation among the voting population with a jump in voter turn-out (74.98%) and also with the voter age population turn-out (64.70%). The Effective Number of Electoral Parties (ENEP)¹⁰² has also maintained its moderate score (6.56) for the 2010

⁹⁶ CMFR, "The Cmfr Monitor of Media Coverage of the 2010 Elections," no. Government TV covered Teodoro most, ignored bottom dwellers (2010), <http://www.cmfr-phil.org/2010/03/18/government-tv-covered-teodoro-most-ignored-bottom-dwellers/>.

⁹⁷ Alan Abramowitz, Brad Alexander, and Matthew Gunning, "Incumbency, Redistricting and the Decline of Competition in U.S. House Elections", *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 68, no. 1, 2006.

⁹⁸ Marianne Stewart and Harold Clark, "The (Un)Importance of Party Leaders: Leader Images And Party Choice in the 1987 British Election", *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 54, No. 2 (May, 1992), pp. 447-470.

⁹⁹ Ernesto Dal Bo, Pedro Dal Bo, and Jason Snyder, "Political Dynasties ... cit."

¹⁰⁰ Luisito Villanueva, "Philippine Electoral Distortion ... cit."

¹⁰¹ Olof Petersson et al., "Media and Elections in Sweden", in *Report from the Democratic Audit of Sweden 2006*, Stockholm: SNS-Centre for Business and Policy Studies, 2006.

¹⁰² Pippa Norris, *Electoral Engineering: Voting ... cit.*, p. 83.

elections. This inquiry contends that the automation of elections has not dampened political competition (narrowly defined in this study).

Table no. 2. Voter Turn-out for Senate from 2001-2013

Year	Registered Voters	Actual Votes	Voter Turn-out %	Voting Age Population (VAP) Turnout % (Voter turnout as defined by the percentage of the voting age population that actually voted)	Effective Number of Electoral Parties (ENEP) for the Senate
2013	52,014,648	31,571,930	60.70	50.58	6.52
2010	50,896,164	38,162,985	74.98	64.70	6.56
2007	45,453,236	28,945,710	63.68	54.87	7.56
2004	43,536,028	13,241,974	30.42	27.18	3.98

Source: (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA). 2015)

Do winning votes and the institutional features of the electoral exercise have effects that are independent of one another? Are there other variables that affect winning of votes? As can be seen in Table 3, Model I reports that predictors with significant coefficients were Re-election ($\beta = .429$, $p < .001$), Political Party Membership, broken down into membership in the non-dominant minority party 2 ($\beta = .389$, $p < .001$) and other accredited parties – party 3 ($\beta = .401$, $p < .001$) and Regional affiliation of the candidate, broken down into Region 1 (Luzon) ($\beta = .318$, $p < .01$), Region 2 (Visayas) ($\beta = .276$, $p < .05$) and Region 3 (Mindanao) ($\beta = .281$, $p < .01$). What happens if candidates' membership to a political dynasty as a dummy variable is included in the analysis? Model II presents what would happen if affiliation to a political dynasty and allegations of corruption were added. Results indicate that only the net effect of political dynasty was substantial and significant ($\beta = .251$, $p < .05$).

Has corruption been curbed or at least checked as a result of the automation? The net effect of allegations of corruption ($\beta = .442$, $p > .05$) was not significant. Model II suggests that the net effects of political dynasty membership are substantial but are largely independent of allegations of corruption. This provides evidence of how political dynasties are entrenched in electoral exercises and are largely seen as different from corruption. In addition, Model II explained roughly 66% of the variance of winning votes in the NCR, so that the additional variable is not a trivial predictor of votes.

How has media made an impact on election reforms? Would significant net effects of re-election, political party membership, regional affiliation and

dynasty hold up with the addition of another control variable? The best candidate for such a test is an indicator of media exposure. Model III generated significant effects for the additional variable of media exposure or NewsReport ($\beta = .371$, $p < .001$). Similar to Model II, the net effect of allegations of corruption was not significant and the same goes for regional affiliation whose net effect moderated by news report was no longer significant. Unlike the Presidential elections where there is no possibility of re-election, senators can run for re-election provided that they do not serve for more than two consecutive terms. This explains the strong presence of the predictor "Re-election" or the incumbency advantage. Moreover, the model now explained roughly 78% of the variance of Senatorial voting outcomes in the NCR.

In what concerns the question: Has support for election automation been translated to electoral success? Would the persistent significant net effects of re-election, political party membership, dynasty and news report coverage hold up with the addition of one more control variable? This inquiry includes a dummy variable representing the Senatorial candidates' support (or non-support) for the automation bill as a final control variable. This model generated significant effects for four key variables in the analysis: Re-election ($\beta = .253$, $p < .001$); Political Party membership, Party2 ($\beta = .267$, $p < .001$); (Dynasty ($\beta = .292$, $p < .001$) and NewsReport ($\beta = .358$, $p < .001$). Allegations of corruption and candidates' support for automation were not significant. A closer inspection of the magnitudes of the standardised coefficients indicates that NewsReport had the highest impact while re-election had the least. This seems to reinforce the arguments that the "fourth estate" or media as a key factor in election exercises is gaining prominence. More importantly, Model IV explained approximately 78% of the variance of winning votes in the NCR. The addition of the final control variable of support or non-support for automation is not an inconsequential predictor of votes.

One of the issues that could compromise the analytical power of regressions is the existence of multicollinearity. Statisticians and social science researchers repeatedly caution about the detection and awareness of the "adverse effects of multicollinearity" and how relationships arising from regressions with this condition prove highly unreliable and problematic¹⁰³. One of the most common tests employed in detecting multicollinearity is the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF): Specifically, a VIF of "10 or even as low as 4 (equivalent to a tolerance level of 0.10 or 0.25)" indicate the presence of unwarranted or severe multicollinearity¹⁰⁴. Tests to detect multicollinearity on Model IV, reveal that the highest VIF recorded for the coefficients is 9.65 which corresponds to the Independent Variable "Allegations of Corruption". All other VIF statistics of the model coefficients are well below the 4.0 threshold.

¹⁰³ Edward Mansfield and Billy Helms, "Detecting Multicollinearity," *The American Statistician*, vol. 36, no. 3a, 1982, p.158.

¹⁰⁴ Robert O'Brien, "A Caution Regarding Rules of Thumb for Variance Inflation Factors", *Quality & Quantity*, vol.41, no.5, 2007, p. 674.

Table no. 3. Linear Regression on Senatorial Candidates
(from voters residing in the National Capital Region) (N=60)
Dependent Variable: Number of Votes per Candidate

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	β
Constant	10.252	.390		10.332	.364		10.482	.299		10.653	.354	
Re-election	1.403	.303	.429***	.891	.326	.273**	.912	.262	.279***	.827	.276	.253***
Political Party												
Party1	.893	.542	.164	.466	.520	.086	-.144	.441	-.026	-.324	.474	-.059
Party2	1.703	.429	.389***	1.564	.424	.357**	1.300	.354	.297***	1.170	.378	.267***
Party3	1.478	.365	.401***	.980	.372	.266**	.367	.327	.100	.269	.352	.073
Region												
Region1	1.100	.457	.318**	1.023	.429	.296*	.663	.358	.192	.620	.367	.179
Region2	.981	.489	.276*	.914	.456	.257*	.357	.392	.100	.337	.401	.095
Region3	1.085	.473	.281**	.909	.451	.236*	.729	.367	.189	.690	.371	.179
Dynasty				.847	.339	.251*	.991	.300	.296***	.977	.303	.292***
CorrCharge				.744	.442	.170	.321	.370	.073	.426	.392	.097
NewsReport							.189		.371***	.183	.046	.358***
Automation (No Support)										-.254	.301	-.072
Automation (Full Support)										.165	.309	.043
R^2		.597			.666			.782			.788	
<i>F</i> for change in		11.22**			11.296*			17.926*			14.839*	
R^2		*			**			**			**	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Conclusions: The Impact Of The Philippine Electoral Reform Experiences

The exploratory inquiry purports that adopting a perspective recognizing changes and continuities in political culture and processes of the recent automation of elections in the Philippines would be analytically illuminating. Using an analytical framework that assumes pendulum swings from entrenched practices (i.e. continuities of patron-client networks) and attempts at change (i.e. transformations such as the electoral automation) and reinforcing these with findings from the naïve and exploratory models proposed in this inquiry; provides a more nuanced perspective of the 2010 elections.

In what concerns the continuities, regression analyses indicated that allegations of corruption are predictors that are largely independent of the outcome of votes suggesting that the electorate is indifferent about allegations of corruption as key considerations for election loss or victory. One can argue that the level of trust of voters towards candidates in a dysfunctional and distorted system yields complex results. The Philippine election system distortions highlight the prevalence of dysfunctional bureaucratic processes epitomized by the COMELEC. A number of laws, statutes and provisions from COMELEC prove ineffectual: "these regulations are so stringent that they are considered as "dead-letter" provisions that have proven unrealistic or difficult to enforce"¹. Moreover, these dysfunctions have led to debilitating ambiguity where election laws appear grey and untested². Within the interstices of these bureaucratic dysfunctions, election actors use whatever means necessary also referred to as creative compliance in achieving electoral goals³.

Regression analyses for the Senatorial vote provide a glimpse of how dysfunction in the electoral system is compensated by the powerful and persistent presence of patron-client relationships. Incumbents or those running for re-election perpetuate themselves and their allies in power through the strategic and tactical use of patron-client relationships. Presidential candidates who ran for the May 2010 elections were supported by the usual few patrons present in the Philippine political landscape for centuries⁴. Furthermore, the May 2010 automated elections; similar to previous electoral reform efforts before it have been consistently hijacked by powerful patron elites:

¹ Julio Teehankee, "Electoral Politics ... cit.", p. 188.

² Che De los Reyes and Karol Anne Ilagan, "All Right to Lie, Cheat, Bluff? Election Laws Gray, Untested", *Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism*, 2010, <http://pcij.org/stories/all-right-to-lie-cheat-bluff-election-laws-gray-untested/>.

³ Roel Landingin, "Venture Capitalists or True Believers? Only 308 Donors Funded Campaign for Presidency", *Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism*, 2010, <http://pcij.org/stories/only-308-donors-funded-campaign-for-presidency/>.

⁴ *Ibidem*

One important consequence of the blockage of political reform is that a narrow set of elite interests has continued to dominate the policy-making process. Consistent and aggressive efforts to sideline NGOs from the policy arena have helped guarantee that the legislature remains a preserve of the political-economic elite⁵.

In a distorted election system that has high barriers to popular participation and victory measured in huge capital outlays – clientelist linkages fuelled by complex patronage determines elections outcomes. Regression analysis, particularly the predictor of political dynasty membership for the Senatorial vote, provides evidence of how debilitating dysfunction in the electoral system is overrun by clientelist linkages.

The impact of entrenched elites represented by individual candidates with very loose political party affiliations has been documented in this exploratory study. Scholars and practitioners have reaffirmed that “unfortunately, political parties in the Philippines are loose coalitions of personalities and political clans organized around clientelistic machines” designed with the sole purpose of holding on to or claiming new areas to exert power⁶. Election reforms are compromised by the presence of clientelist linkages. It may even be argued that as long as clientelist linkages persist electoral reform would be very difficult to implement especially in a context where “legislators in the Philippines are largely free agents operating independently of the party leaders who, in other democracies with stronger parties, might compel the rank-and-file to support political reforms”⁷. This remains one of the remaining puzzles of Philippine politics:

The paradox of Philippine politics and governance is that despite the long tradition of institutionalized democratic practices and history of popular struggles, Philippine society has engendered an elitist and clientelistic democracy embedded in an underdeveloped economy⁸.

In what concerns the changes, regression analyses seem to indicate that the promise of election reform hinges on the role that media plays as well as the increasing presence of loosely-coupled networks of stakeholders. Well beyond the scope of this inquiry is the impact of new forms of social media (i.e. the internet, social networking sites, the Short-Message-System [SMS] or texting phenomenon) in strengthening networks among stakeholders. New forms of media have gained tremendous popularity, evidence of this is that the

⁵ Kent Eaton, "Restoration or Transformation? ... cit.", p. 491.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 490.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸ Julio Teehankee, "Consolidation or Crisis of Clientelistic Democracy? The 2004 Synchronized Elections in the Philippines", in *Between Consolidation and Crisis Elections and Democracy in Five Nations in Southeast Asia*, ed. A. Croissant and B. Martin, Berlin, Lit Verlag, 2006, p. 215.

Philippines is known as the texting capital of the world⁹ and is known for having the highest social networking engagement in the Asia-Pacific¹⁰. Widespread examples of volunteerism and citizen participation reported in the May 2010 elections bode well for the sustenance of these positive networks. As a matter of fact, the May 2010 elections have been “regarded as the highest non-partisan elections monitoring since 1980’s, a pioneer in elections observation activities in the world”¹¹. The change that the May 2010 elections showed was the powerful presence of civil society. It also saw how “political parties, the Catholic Church, its affiliates and various advocacy groups – had election observers in the room for the entire day to watch the process; a very robust process”¹². These networks should not be confused as *ad hoc* movements coming and going with every election. Some of them have become successful in bringing “non-traditional parties that bring different sectors together”; an example of this would be the “Institute for Popular Democracy, a Manila-based NGO that has devoted its considerable talents to strengthening the political party”¹³. These networks are an expression of “contested democracy” a welcome paradigmatic alternative highlighting “the element of agency, apart from contestation” that not only places emphasis on entrenched patron-client and clientelist models but also “provides the opportunity for subordinate classes and communities to push for popular empowerment”¹⁴.

This exploratory inquiry proposes that in understanding the interplay of systemic corruption, the implementation of election reforms and the pervasiveness of patron-client networks in a unique Philippine setting – a more nuanced perspective may be necessary. A perspective recognizing the co-existence of debilitating continuities and seemingly effective changes within a distorted electoral system can provide some tentative answers to puzzling results typical of Philippine elections. This inquiry used a non-experimental correlational approach – regressing votes won by candidates with certain key independent variables – in order to arrive at models in attempting to explain electoral behavior that has resulted from an unprecedented electoral engineering initiative – election automation. Preliminary models generated provide some

⁹ Riza Olchondra, "Rp: From Texting Capital to Leader in (Inter) Networking", *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 20 September 2008.

¹⁰ Sarah Radwanick, "Philippines Exhibits Highest Social Networking Engagement", in *Social Networking Habits Vary Considerably Across Asia-Pacific Markets*, Singapore, comScore, 2010.

¹¹ Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL), "International Election Observation Mission Philippines National and Local Elections 2010 Interim Report".

¹² Bill Sweeney, "Reflecting on the Philippine's 1986 and 2010 Elections", 2010, <http://www.ifes.org/Content/Publications/News-in-Brief/2010/June/Reflecting-on-the-Philippines-1986-and-2010-Elections.aspx>.

¹³ Kent Eaton, "Restoration or Transformation? ... cit.", p. 492.

¹⁴ Nathan Quimpo, "Review: Oligarchic Patrimonialism ... cit.", p.248.

empirical evidence to the argument that viewing Philippine elections primarily from the perspective of patron-client networks is insufficient. Complementing this with contested democracy as manifested by mainstream news agencies as well as an emerging phenomenon of new media, provides fresh theoretical perspectives.